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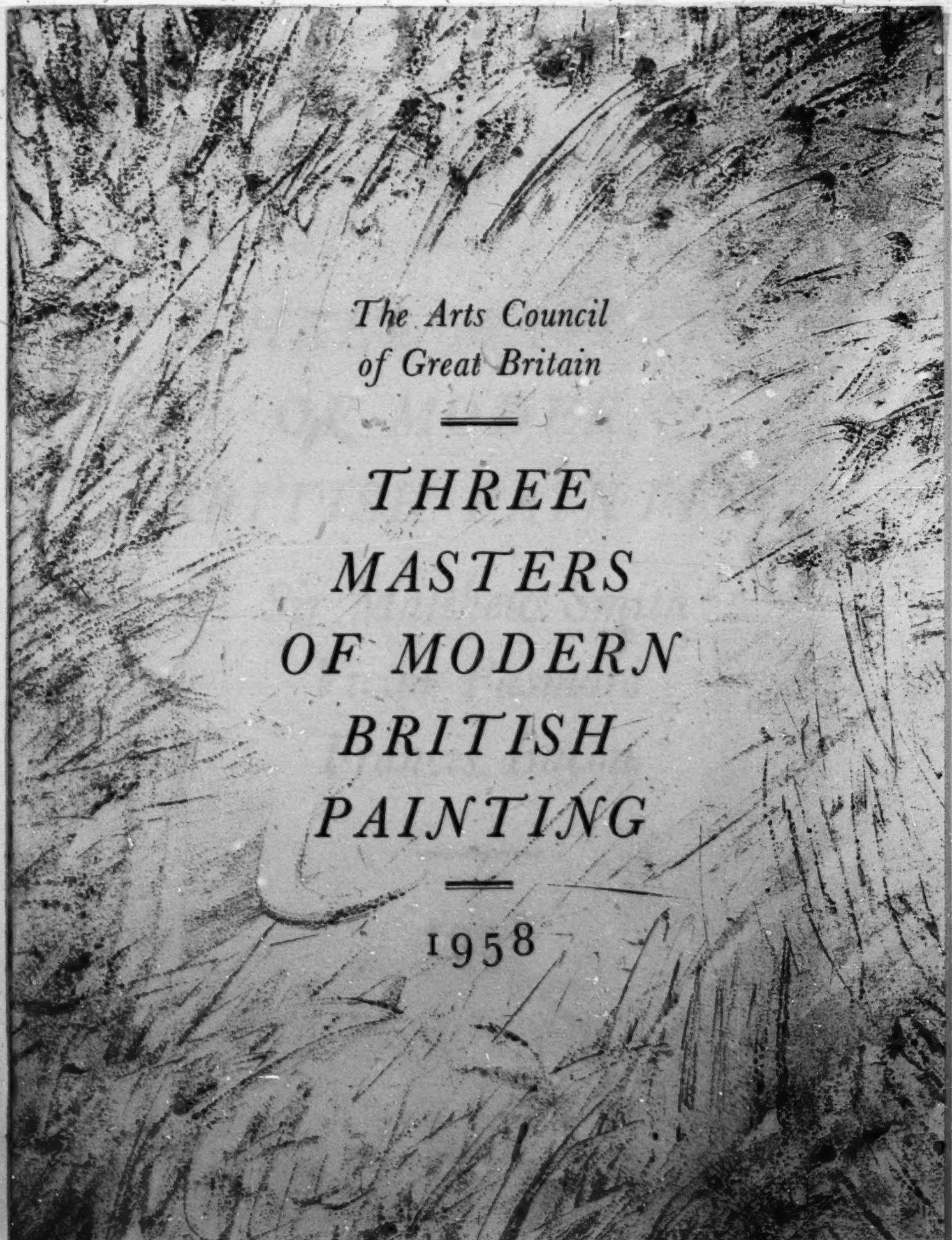

The Arts Council of Great Britain

THREE MASTERS OF MODERN BRITISH PAINTING

1958

An Arts Council Exhibition

THREE MASTERS OF MODERN BRITISH PAINTING

Sir Matthew Smith
Victor Pasmore
Francis Bacon

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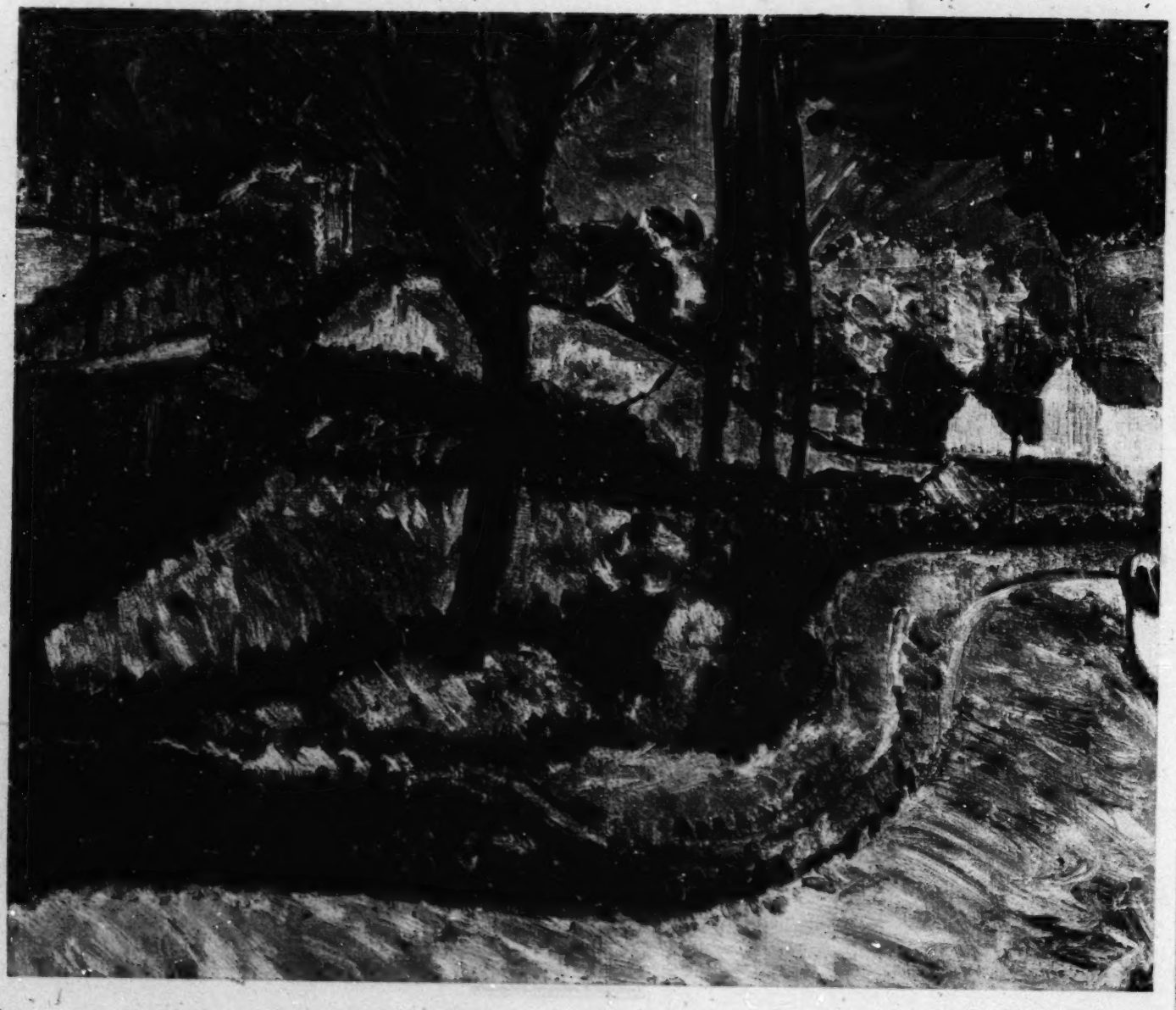

PLATE I: A Winding Road, Cornish Landscape, 1920 (*Cat. no.* 3)

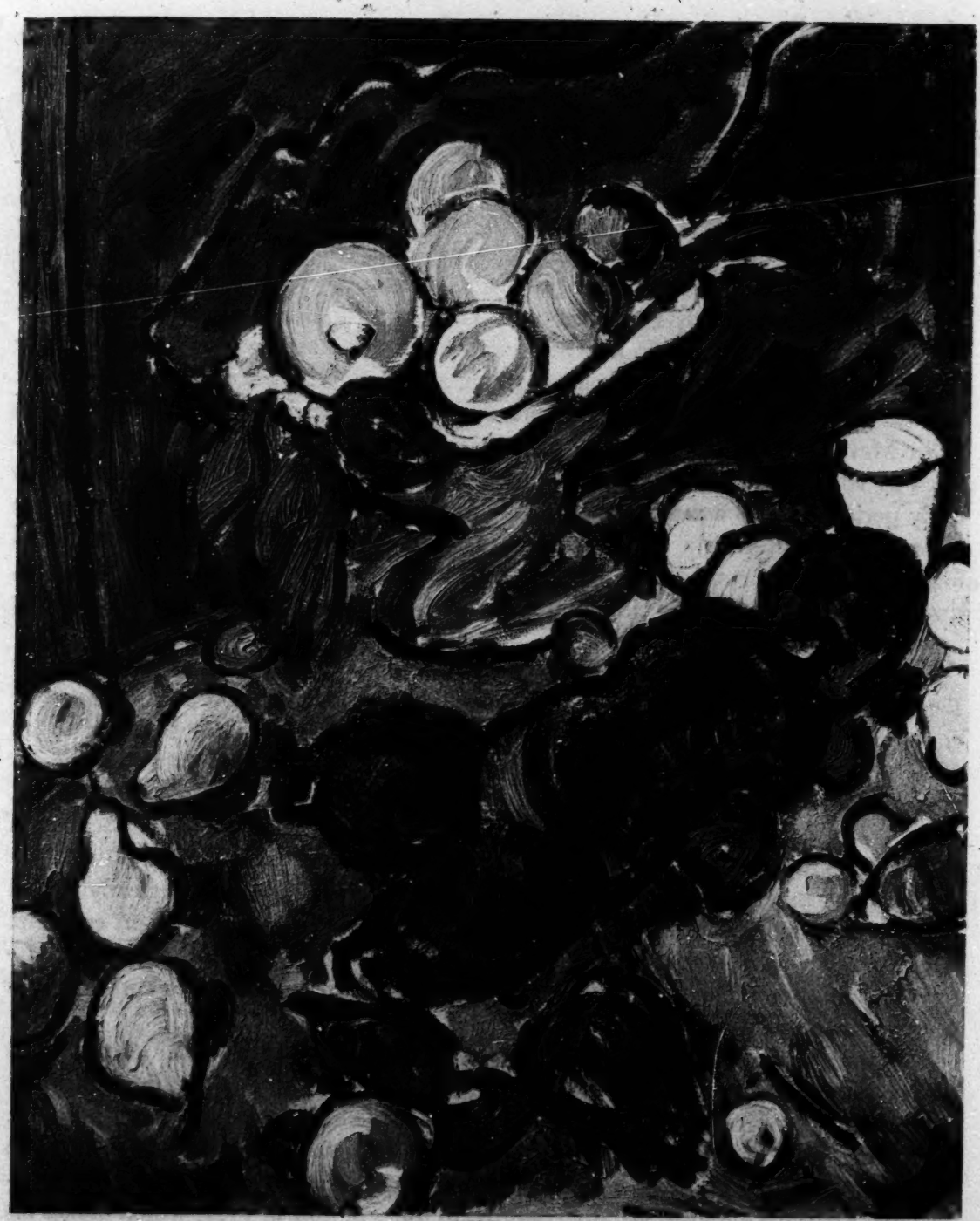

PLATE II: Still Life, 1948 (*Cat. no.* 17)

FOREWORD

These three artists have not been chosen because they have some common aim, outlook or style or because they reveal some underlying characteristic of British painting. Indeed they vividly reveal the wide stylistic diversity of contemporary art. In time they cover nearly half a century. The impressionist tradition, the influence of the School of Paris, the fantasy and violence of surrealist imagery, and the more rigid and geometric aspects of non-figurative art may all be traced here in the work of these three artists whose achievements are widely recognised outside this country.

Sir Matthew Smith who may be called the doyen of living British artists – he was born in 1879 – is the outstanding English *fauve*. In the Fitzroy Street nudes of his early period there is a marked extremity of colour contrasts. This soon gave way in the middle twenties to a fuller, richer and more harmonious fusion of colour and form which he has consistently pursued ever since in a magnificent series of still-lifes, nudes, and, less frequently, landscapes. It is this passionate and instinctive feeling for colour which marks his work.

If Sir Matthew Smith has deviated little from his chosen stylistic path, Victor Pasmore has never stood still for very long. He has in fact moved with complete conviction and impressive integrity from his early Sickertian impressionism to his present non-figurative constructions in which he has discarded flat surfaces for actual forms in space. In the early thirties his work helped materially to establish, with Coldstream, Claude Rogers and Graham Bell, the Euston Road School of painting. Ten years later came his riverscapes at Hammersmith with a Whistlerian delicacy and an oriental calligraphy. Then in 1948, by what seems a perfectly logical step, he abandoned realism and embarked on a series of square, oval and exquisite spiral motifs which he calls in many instances subjective landscapes. From 1955 he has virtually abandoned painting on a flat surface and has turned to constructions and reliefs in wood and plastic.

The third artist, Francis Bacon is an unique figure among post-war painters. He shares with the surrealists both the technique of illusion and a repertoire of horrific imagery. His power to disturb has had a considerable influence on younger painters. Attracted by the quality of the press photograph in which images seem to melt into the background, he has produced by means of large areas of bare canvas in his backgrounds a surface of paint, usually confined to tones of blue or grey, which makes his screaming or grimacing figures seem to be in a state of dissolution. More recently, notably in his series of canvases depicting Van Gogh, his palette has become more

strident and his impasto richer. He has achieved in his own words, 'a complete interlocking of image and paint, so that the image is the paint and vice versa'. Technically this intuitive approach is entirely in keeping with the present mood of the contemporary movement in non-figurative painting.

We are very conscious that owners of paintings by these particular artists are constantly being asked to lend them to exhibitions, both here and abroad, and we are, therefore, especially grateful to them for their kindness in allowing us to borrow them for this exhibition, which it is hoped will provoke controversy as well as provide pleasure wherever it is shown.

PHILIP JAMES

CATALOGUE

Sir Matthew Smith

Born in 1879 at Halifax. Worked in the family business of wire-making for four years from 1896. From 1900–1907 he studied art, first at Manchester School of Art then at the Slade School. Worked in France from 1908–1911, attending for a short period Matisse's school in the Boulevard des Invalides. In 1912 he returned to England and married, working partly in Cornwall and partly in a studio in Fitzroy Street, with an interval 1916–1919 when he served in the army. In 1920 he was elected a member of the London Group and after painting mainly in France for some years held his first one-man exhibition at the Mayor gallery in 1926. One-man exhibitions at Tooth's and the Lefevre galleries followed between 1927–1929. From 1930–1940 he lived and worked in Paris until the fall of France. In 1938 a group of his paintings was shown at the Venice Biennale and in 1942 a large retrospective exhibition of his work was given at Leeds. Awarded C.B.E. in 1949. Represented this country in a one-man exhibition at the Venice Biennale of 1950. In 1953 a large retrospective exhibition of his painting was arranged at the Tate Gallery. Knighted in 1954. Hon. D.Litt. conferred by the University of London in 1956. Is represented in most of the important public and private collections in this country, U.S.A., Canada, Australia, etc. Lives now in London.

1 LILIES 1913–1914
30 × 22 in.
Lent by Leeds City Art Gallery

2 DULCIE 1915
32¼ × 30 in.
Lent by Southampton Art Gallery

3 A WINDING ROAD, CORNISH LANDSCAPE 1920 (PLATE I)
21 × 25½ in.
Lent by the British Council

4 THREE PEARS c. 1920
22⅜ × 18¼ in.
Lent by Bristol City Art Gallery

PLATE III: The Studio of Ingres, 1945–1946 (*Cat. no.* 25)

PLATE IV: Oval Motif in grey, ochre and lilac, 1951 (*Cat. no.* 35)

5 CORNISH LANDSCAPE c. 1920
20½×25 in.
Lent by Mrs Eric Dugdale

6 NUDE c. 1925
25×32 in.
Lent by Edward le Bas, Esq., R.A.

7 GIRL RECLINING 1926
36×29 in.
Lent by the artist

8 FEMME EN CHEMISE c. 1927
30×25 in.
Lent by Brighton Art Gallery

9 FLOWERS IN A BLUE VASE c. 1928
24×20 in.
Lent by Alexander Margulies, Esq.

10 STILL LIFE—PEONIES AND LILIES c. 1929
29¼×24½ in.
Lent by Lady Olivier

11 PALE PINK ROSES c. 1930
21×25½ in.
Lent by Kenneth Marr-Johnson, Esq.

12 NEAR AIX-EN-PROVENCE 1932
18½×26 in.
Lent by James Archdale, Esq.

13 LANDSCAPE NEAR CAGNES 1935
15×18 in.
Lent by Dr Henry Roland

14 GIRL ASLEEP 1935
21½×25½ in.
Lent by Alexander Margulies, Esq.

15 WINTER LANDSCAPE, FRÉJUS 1936
23½×28½ in.
Lent by Commander G. L. Lowis, R.N.

16 LANDSCAPE, AIX 1938
22×30 in.
Lent by E. C. Gregory, Esq.

17 STILL LIFE 1948 (PLATE II)
40×32 in.
Lent by the artist

18 DECORATIVE COMPOSITION 1951
72×38¼ in.
Lent by the artist

19 DIANA MARSH 1954
30×25 in.
Lent by the artist

Victor Pasmore

Born 1908 at Chelsham, Surrey. Educated at Harrow School. Employed by the L.C.C. 1928–1938, studying in his spare time at the Central School of Arts under Hartrick. Since 1938 devoted himself entirely to painting. Taught from 1945–1949 at Camberwell School of Art and from 1949–1953 at the Central School. Since 1954 has been Master of Painting at Durham University and also consulting designer to the Peterlee (New Town) Development Corporation.

Originally one of the founders of the Euston Road School, with William Coldstream, Claude Rogers, Graham Bell and others, his painting from 1947 onwards became increasingly abstract. During the last three years has concentrated on three dimensional reliefs and constructions. Has held many one-man exhibitions in London galleries and the provinces. Is represented in the collections of the Tate Gallery, British Council, Arts Council and in important public galleries in the United States and the Dominions as well as in notable private collections such as Sir Kenneth Clark's. The development of this artist from early impressionism to the most austere abstraction is shown in this cross-section of his work during the last twenty years.

20 THE RED TABLECLOTH 1936
25×30 in.
Lent by Sir Kenneth Clark, K.C.B.

21 EVERLASTING FLOWERS 1941
24×18 in.
Lent by Lady Herbert

22 A WINTER MORNING 1944
20×30 in.
Lent by Sir Kenneth Clark, K.C.B.

23 THE WOUNDED BIRD 1944
20×30 in.
Lent by Sir Kenneth Clark, K.C.B.

24 GARDENS 1945
20×24 in.
Lent by The Rt Hon. The Earl Haig

25 THE STUDIO OF INGRES 1945–1946 (PLATE III)
30×40 in.
Lent by Sir Kenneth Clark, K.C.B.

26 RIVERSIDE GARDEN, HAMMERSMITH 1946
18×23½ in.
Lent by Dr Henry Roland

27 THE HANGING GARDENS OF HAMMERSMITH 1946–1947
32×41 in.
Lent by Miss Pamela Harris

28 THE TOILETTE 1947
28×14 in.
Lent by Mrs Eric Dugdale

29 VIEW FROM MAGDALENE BRIDGE, CAMBRIDGE 1947
22×32 in.
Lent by Kenneth Harrison, Esq.

30 RECTANGULAR MOTIF: RED AND MUSTARD 1948
24×20 in.
Lent by Southampton Art Gallery

31 SQUARE MOTIF IN BROWN, WHITE, BLUE AND OLIVE 1950
Oil and collage 30×25 in.
Lent by the artist

32 SQUARE MOTIF IN GREEN, BLUE, BROWN AND LILAC 1950
20×24 in.
Lent by Derek Hill, Esq.

33 SPIRAL MOTIF (SUBJECTIVE LANDSCAPE) IN BLACK AND WHITE 1951
24½×12½ in.
Lent by H. P. Juda, Esq.

34 SPIRAL MOTIF (SUBJECTIVE LANDSCAPE) IN BLACK AND WHITE 1951
32×9 in.
Lent by E. C. Gregory, Esq.

35 OVAL MOTIF IN GREY, OCHRE AND LILAC 1951 (PLATE IV)
17¾×14½ in.
Lent by Charles Gimpel, Esq.

36 PAINTED RELIEF 1951
21½×13¼ in.
Lent by Dr Stephen Pasmore

37 OVAL MOTIF IN WHITE, BROWN, PINK AND MAROON 1952
28×18 in.
Lent by the artist

38 SQUARE MOTIF IN BLUE, BROWN, CHERRY AND LILAC 1954
Collage 18×14 in.
Lent by the artist

39 RELIEF CONSTRUCTION IN BLACK AND WHITE 1954
41×18 in.
Lent by the artist

40 RELIEF PAINTING IN WHITE, BLACK, INDIAN AND MAROON 1954
27×29 in.
Lent by the artist

PLATE V: Pope with Fan Canopy, 1953 (*Cat. no.* 48)

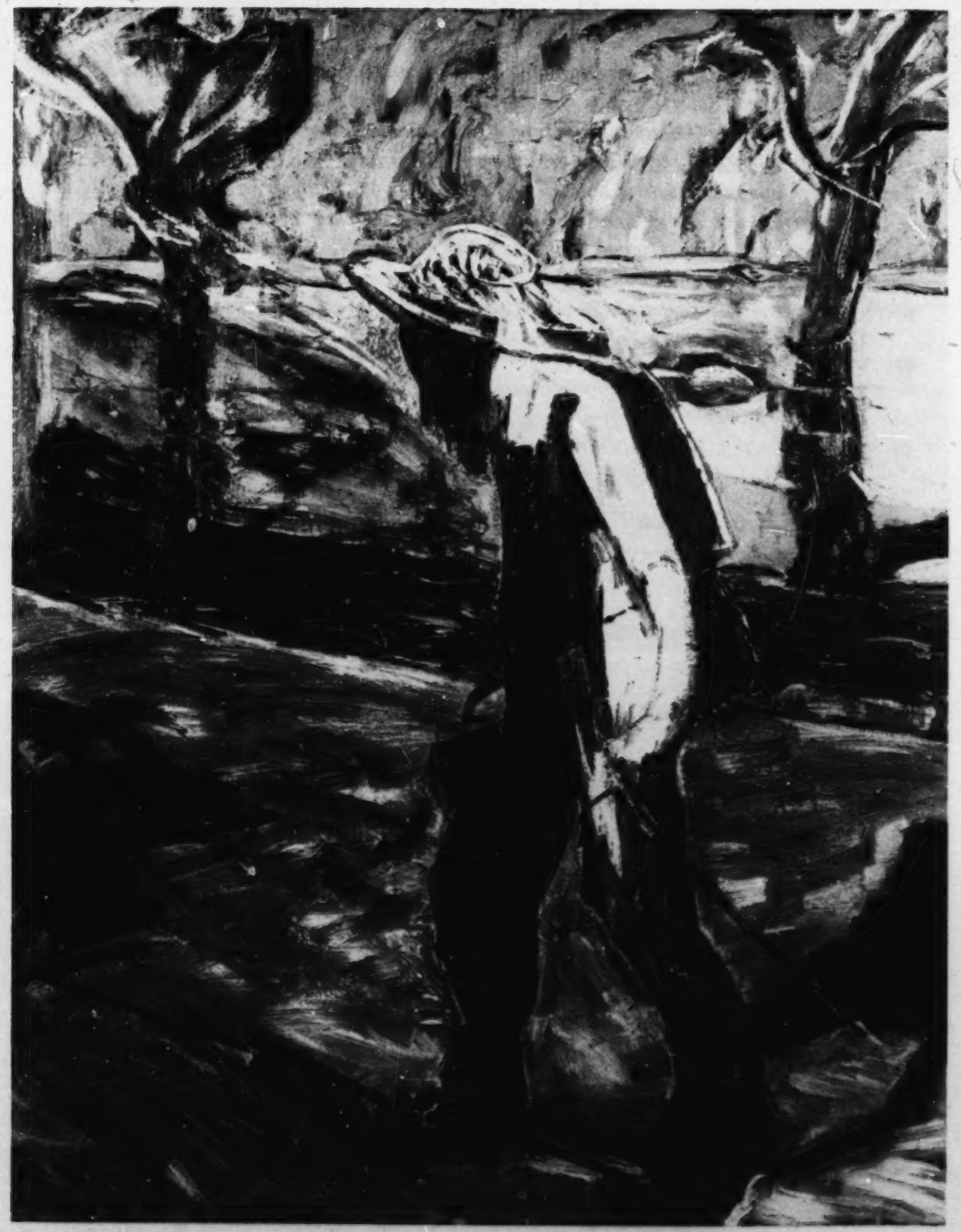

PLATE VI: Study for Portrait of Van Gogh no. 4, 1957 (*Cat. no.* 54)

Francis Bacon

Born in Dublin in 1910. Started to paint about 1930. Exhibited in group exhibitions with Graham Sutherland, Robert Medley and others in the thirties. Held his first one-man show in London at the Hanover Gallery in 1949, and subsequently at that gallery in 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955 and 1957. Also held one-man exhibitions at the Durlacher Gallery, New York in 1953 and at the Galerie Rive Droite, Paris in 1957. In 1958 held one-man exhibitions in Turin, Milan and Rome. Was chosen as one of the artists to represent this country at the Venice Biennale of 1954. His work is included in many public collections; the Tate Gallery, the Arts Council, the Museum of Modern Art, New York and the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, the Art Institutes of Chicago, Detroit, etc.

41 SEATED FIGURE c. 1936
29×37 in.
Lent by Peter Cochrane, Esq.

42 FIGURE AT THE BASE OF A CRUCIFIXION c. 1945
49×41¼ in.
Lent by James Bomford, Esq.

43 STUDY FOR THE CRUCIFIXION c. 1945
23¾×18¼ in.
Lent by Sir Colin Anderson

44 HEAD IV 1949
32¼×26 in.
Lent by James Bomford, Esq.

45 APE c. 1951
60×46 in.
Lent by K. J. Hewett, Esq.

46 WALKING ARAB CARRYING CHILD c. 1952
78×56 in.
Lent by James Bomford, Esq.

47 STUDY OF A NUDE 1953
23¼×19¼ in.
Lent by R. J. Sainsbury, Esq.

48 POPE WITH FAN CANOPY 1953 (PLATE V)
78×54 in.
Lent by James Bomford, Esq.

49 SLEEPING CARDINAL 1953
60×46 in.
Lent by James Bomford, Esq.

50 PORTRAIT OF CARDINAL 1954
23¼×19¼ in.
Lent by K. J. Hewett, Esq.

51 STUDY FOR FIGURE NO. 4 1956
59×46 in.
Lent by the Contemporary Art Society

52 OWLS 1956–1957
24×19¾ in.
Lent by Sir Colin Anderson

53 FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE 1956–1957
59×46 in.
Lent by the Contemporary Art Society

54 STUDY FOR PORTRAIT OF VAN GOGH NO. 4 1957 (PLATE VI)
59×47 in.
Lent by the Contemporary Art Society

LIST OF LENDERS

Sir Colin Anderson
James Archdale, Esq.
James Bomford, Esq.
Brighton Art Gallery
Bristol City Art Gallery
The British Council
Sir Kenneth Clark, K.C.B.
Peter Cochrane, Esq.
Contemporary Art Society
Mrs Eric Dugdale
Charles Gimpel, Esq.
E. C. Gregory, Esq.
The Rt Hon. The Earl Haig
Miss Pamela Harris
Kenneth Harrison, Esq.
Derek Hill, Esq.
Lady Herbert
K. J. Hewett, Esq.
H. Juda, Esq.
Edward le Bas, Esq., R.A.
Leeds City Art Gallery
Commander G. L. Lowis, A.F.C., R.N.
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K. Marr-Johnson, Esq.
Lady Olivier
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Southampton Art Gallery

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